DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 195 912 CG 014 867

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TITLE Teleology as Logical Phenomenology: Some Therapeutic Implications.
PUB DATE Sep 80
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (88th, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, September 1-5, 1980). Best copy available.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Theories; Conditioning; *Mental Health; Perception; *Personality Theories; Psychology; *Psychotherapy; Research Needs; State of the Art Reviews; Therapeutic Environment; *Therapy
IDENTIFIERS *Phenomenology; *Teleology

ABSTRACT

Phenomenology is an important force in the development of psychological theory, rather than a variant type of counseling method. A distinction must be drawn between the sensory phenomenology in which gestaltists focus on sensory receptors, and logical pheomenology in which the grounding of belief or self-identity is viewed as a prediction or premise. This concept of logical phenomenology provides a framework for understanding teleological human behavior. Three areas relevant to psychotherapy which would benefit from phenomenological-theoretical investigation are: (1) the pervasive role of awareness in human conditioning; (2) the false distinction between insight and non-insight therapies; and (3) the telic nature of mental health. Phenomenological explanations in these areas could provide a distinctly different image of humanity than that currently accepted by psychological explanations. (Author/NRB)

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TELEOLOGY AS LOGICAL PHENOMENOLOGY: SOME THERAPEUTIC IMPLICATIONS

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CG 014867

Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association, September 1980, Montreal, Canada.

Teleology as Logical Phenomenology: Some Therapeutic Implications

Sigmund Freud once avoided personal contact with Josef Popper-Lynkeus, the social philosopher and a man that Freud genuinely admired, because Popper-Lynkeus courted the friendship of Ernst Mach (Rieff, 1959, p. 26). Mach was the notorious physicist who, at the turn of the 20th century, was leading what today we would call a Kuhnian (1970) paradigmatic revolution against traditional reductionistic explanations in physics, denying that atoms were "real" or that it was essential to "reduce" explanations to such underlying "things" in order to practice science (Bradley, 1971, p. 13 and p. 56). Mach referred to his approach as a phenomenological physics (Cassirer, 1950, p. 93), by which he meant that the orders we know of in nature through interrelatedness and patterned consistency are not all "there," independent of our mental contribution in coming to know them (Bradley, 1971, p. 14). We as thinking or theorizing human beings lend some of the order to what we then call the meaning of things or events. Freud found this style of scientific explanation unacceptable, a strange position for him to take because he was finding in his psychoanalytical work that psychic reality always takes precedence over physical reality (Freud, 1952, p. 598).

Mach was suggesting that knowledge is always tied to assumption, interpretation, or point of view--an attitude that Einstein later formalized into relativity theory. Mach once made this early relativism known to William James (1952) through the example of a stream of water, flowing under a bridge on which assume that we are standing (see pp. 783-784). If we fix our attention on and thereby predicate the bridge as "the" locus of our identity

we "see" the water moving and the bridge remaining stationary. However, if by staring for a long time we fix our complete attention on the water, affirming an altered perspective for our identity, we can acquire the illusion of the bridge moving along over the surface of the water which by comparison appears stationary. James actually tried to foster this illusion in his personal experience, with mixed success (Ibid., p. 784).

It was a pity that Freud could not forego his Newtonian view of science and thereby adapt his thinking to Machian physics. This would have unquestionably helped him and probably rendered unnecessary the libido theory which he was compelled to frame based upon Newtonian reductionism. He seems to have perceived Machian phenomenology as an attack on the validity of his method of gathering data from clients. He had a similar confrontation with Vaihinger's philosophy of "As if" during his split with Adler (Ansbacher and Ansbacher, 1956, pp. 77-87). Vaihinger also noted how ideas which we think to be fixed by our first-hand experience of things are actually predicated on an assumptive fiction, so that we behave "as if" such and thus were the case due to our particular slant on things. Today, we might call the Vaihingerian fiction a Kellyian (1955) "construct," or, if formalized as a scientific assumption, a Kuhnian (1970) "paradigm." Freud found Adler's reliance on Vaihinger to be just as intellectually nihilistic as Mach's contentions.

Freud was witnessing the entrance of Kantian phenomenalism to the modern stream of thought. This willingness to permit alternative explanations of the same thing or event, often of an idiosyncratic or subjective nature, is one of the two basic characteristics of the phenomenological spirit. I would suggest that phenomenologists are uniquely qualified to address questions of theory--of the meaningful relationships we draw among our constructs (terms,

schematic labels, etc.)--but that they have not actually affected the method of doing science through "control and prediction" in the context of validation (see Rychlak, 1968, p. 11 and p. 43). Husserl's (1965) dream of framing a phenomenological method that would replace the validational method of conventional science was never realized and, in my opinion, never will be realized.

However, phenomenology is an extremely important theoretical force for the good in psychology. Its message is to wear one's paradigms and theoretical biases lightly, ever ready to allow the spontaneous, immediately occurring meanings of experience to emerge. When they do emerge, rather than distorting these meanings into "something else" so as to meet the strictures of "science," to describe that which is taking place in its own medium--the experiential medium that unbiased observation makes possible. Mach therefore analyzed his thought processes as a physicist and found that his belief in the "existence" of an atom was no more than a conventional belief--kind of like Kant's earlier act of faith in believing that the Ding an Sich (things in themselves) "really existed." A phenomenological analysis of what he was doing led Mach to realize that since there was no "sensation" directly attributable to the "atom" he did not have to use the construct. To impose such conventional terminology on the physicist was to commit an act of theoretical oppression and/or repression. Adler had the same attitude towards Freud's conventional explanations.

This overriding need to be scrupulously honest and genuine in the description of things is what I take to be the second characteristic of phenomenology. It is easy to show that the gestalt psychologists, Wertheimer, Köhler, and Koffka, were not only trying to promote a Kantian alternative to the predominant Lockeanism of their time, but that they definitely sought to present a more genuine, life-like account of the human condition than was

being conveyed in the mechanistic theoretical accounts of behaviorism (see e.g., Köhler, 1961, p. 210). The gestaltists leveled their criticisms and did their experiments on sensory receptors, particularly the eye, and hence I would characterize their approach as a sensory phenomenology. I mean by this that their theories took on the metaphors of sensory "phenomenal fields," differentiated and articulated into figures-on-grounds with greater or lesser clarity due to various laws of organization (see Rychlak, 1973, pp. 405-406). When later these sensory-laden constructions were analogized to personality by people like Lewin and Rogers we had the person or self described as a "figure" on the grounding "phenomenal field" or "life space." The self is either organized as a sort of "good gestalt," or, out of whack with the needs of the biological organism. Psychotherapy is concerned with helping the individual regain that sense of internal consistency which a "good gestalt" would imply.

Though sensory phenomenology has had an important influence on psychotherapy, I personally favor approaches like those of Jung, Binswanger, or Kelly which are best typified as a logical phenomenology. In this case, the grounding of belief or self-identity is viewed more as a predication or premise, made by the person in the Machian or Vaihingerian sense, and brought forward into life as an extension of the meanings framed initially. I think this form of phenomenological description is closer to the spirit of Kantian philosophy, where the categories of the understanding were very much like logical assumptions (synthetic a-priori propositions) which were brought to bear on sensory inputs and literally conceptualized them into something meaningful. I have tried, in my logical learning theory (Rychlak, 1977, Chps. 7 and 8), to capture this phenomenological theme. I believe that people have to predicate their existence, and that the premises taken on through such acts of

predication are not entirely fixed by the "external world" of experience, which (as a noumenal realm) is not so completely ordered and therefore free of theoretical viewpoints (biases) as the empiricists like to pretend.

Psychology's empiricism rests ultimately on a realistic philosophy, an "atomic" model of events in which it is assumed that underlying all behavior we have some sort of natural lawfulness directing events, thanks in part to genetic substances but also due to the shaping of motions into unidirectional patterns of "behavior." This traditional, Newtonian form of scientific explanation is dying slowly in psychology. It still accepts the primacy of what Aristotle named as the material and efficient causes in events. The stimulus-response or input-output course of behavior reigns supreme in this mechanistic-reductionistic account. In my logical learning theory, I have added to the idea of behavior as exclusively a matter of "responding" the notion that human behavior is also telosponsive. A telosponse is the person's taking on (predicating, premising) of meaningful items (images, language terms, judgments, etc.) relating to a referent acting as a purpose for the sake of which behavior is then intended. Note that we have encompassed in this definition both the formal and the final causes of Aristotle's quadratic theory of causation. Logical learning theory--as a logical phenomenology--holds that it is impossible to capture human behavior as known to humans in their immediate experience without taking formal and final causation into account. When Brentano (1973) criticized Wundt's approach to introspection (pp. 29-30) he did so on the grounds that it failed to grasp the self-reflexivity of human thought. Human beings think, and come to know things, but they also transcend the very process and "know that they are thinking and knowing." There is a secondary act in consciousness enabling us to turn back on ourselves and realize that we, after all, are the agents of our

thoughts. We can take a position on life in some manner, but, knowing that this is, after all, open to self-examination and change, there is no reason to believe that we could not change our position "at will."

The style of description which emerges from Brentano's analysis, and which his student, Husserl, carried forward into phenomenology as a basic tenet, is that of a teleology. A teleological theory or description of behavior is one in which it is assumed that the person is behaving according to reasons "for the sake of which" behavior is intended. We can see the pattern of final causation in the grounding reason as a plan, goal, and so forth, and the intentionality of final causation is reflected in the actions to follow based on this predicating reason--that is, behavior is "done for its sake." Unlike cybernetic machines, which never transcend their programs to know that they are in the process of knowing, the transcending human intellect constantly feels the logician's burden of having to "take a position" on life. Possibly this is the reason why we humans so readily fix on "the" point of view in life, because it is so phenomenally uncomfortable having to admit to that "as if" aspect of thought which Vaihinger put his finger on.

Now, as the telosponsive construct suggests, I believe that it is essential for psychology to appreciate the telic nature of human behavior. We human beings do not behave "in response to" unidirectional prompts called stimuli or inputs; we behave "for the sake of" certain premises that we freely affirm and bring forward in the patterns of motion known as "behavior." Rather than the efficient-cause motions being primary, I think of such "responses" as instrumentalities, carrying out what the human being intends should take place, based upon precedently affirmed meanings. Logical learning theory as all phenomenologies places the patternings of meaning

above the palpabilities of material-cause reductions, or the blind impulsions of efficient causation.

How does this relate to psychotherapy? Well, in a general sense, I would contend that psychotherapy of all types can be seen to "work" only because there is in fact some kind of re-conceptualization or re-evaluation of grounding premises by the client, therapist, or both. Many of these teleological facets of behavior are overlooked because they are "in operation" informally. The specific therapy technique, or the ideology of a "school" of psychotherapy misses such very basic, fundamentally human capacities because they are just so natural and informally accepted as the "given" or the "obvious" manifestations of what takes place. I do not have a specific therapeutic technique to offer in this paper, nor do I have a new theory of cure to suggest. My motives to therapy are primarily scholarly (Rychlak, 1968, p. 171). But I would like briefly to address three points which relate to the telic case I have been presenting, and which if phenomenally investigated would, I believe, support my contentions concerning the human image. I will take up these three points in turn.

1. The Pervasive Role of Awareness in Human Conditioning. I am continually amazed by the ease with which modern behavioristic theory has ignored the implications of awareness in human conditioning. As Brewer's (1974) magnificent review of the literature proved beyond reasonable doubt, there is just no truth to the traditional, reductive explanations of classical or operant conditioning that we were all brought up to believe. Rather than being manipulated or shaped into therapeutic cures by a "reinforcement machine" known as the therapist (Krasner, 1962), Brewer's analysis suggests that people in therapy are behaving "for the sake of" some plan or strategy aimed at an advantage they seek, or, possibly, a "point" they wish to make. By a

"point" I mean purpose or intention to demonstrate something to someone, even in a negative or self-destructive sense (as, self-depreciation, a suicide threat, etc.). Page's (1972) work on the role of awareness in operant conditioning in which subjects fail to "get conditioned" quite willfully shows how it is possible that some of our therapy clients may obstruct the intent of our therapeutic program.

Now, it is my contention that a phenomenological analysis of what the conditioning situation or the psychoanalytical situation is "really like" to both client and therapist would shed great light on the processes of both effective and ineffective therapeutic outcomes. How could we accomplish this study? Well, here I am not entirely certain. What we need, it seems to me, is a way for client and therapist alike to put on record the secondary consciousness which Brentano originally pointed to. We might have clients and therapists speak into a private recording machine in vivo which no one could "listen in" on. This might violate the relationship in traditional forms of therapy such as the psychoanalytical, where the technique of free association gets at some of the phenomenal "truth" to which I am referring. But, Freud did ask the clients to limit or repress their critical faculty. That is, every idea was to be told to the therapist, but not every countering idea which might in fact wish to reject the freely associated content was to be furthered. Surely, as the therapist is talking there must be certain reflective ideas passing through the mind of the client. And, of course, doubtless there are many interesting ideas being turned over in the therapist's mind as the client is freely associating to various things.

I suspect that if it were possible to garner what is really being turned over in the minds of therapist and client as the course of therapy actually proceeds--rather than the, essentially, re-construction of this

process in the memory of the participants after the fact--that we would find entirely different things about the way in which therapy "works." In particular, I think we would learn that what is "heard" by either participant, and what is "enacted" in overt behavior would be itself determined by what is predicated via the premises and comments of secondary consciousness. In the behavior mod form of therapy we would find the client seeing the relationship bewteen his or her "operant response" and the contingent circumstances they are likely to bring about--and acting accordingly. Rather than being manipulated the client would be found to cooperate or conform to the "game plan" of the therapist, whose "schedule of reinforcement" would point the way to a worthwhile reward. I do not think that the blindly manipulated person, under the control of environmental contingencies not of his or her making could be found in psychotherapy if we but took the phenomenological attitude and asked genuinely and openly "What is going on here?"

2. The False Distinction Between Insight and Non-Insight Therapies. As a teleologist, I find this time-honored distinction totally misleading. What we have meant by "insight" in the classical vein is more akin to an "acceptance" or willingness to comply with a doctrinaire explanation of "the" causal dynamics of a case history. An implicit assumption made by Freud and all those "insight" therapists that followed his lead was that the person had "a" reason for the illness manifested, and, unless this "given" cause was dealt with, cure would not result or would not be sustained. Freud's reluctance to consider the Machian science or the "As if" philosophy takes root from this very assumption. Hence, in having to focus upon and thereby delineate "the" precise reason for neurotic behavior Freud had to concoct an ideological edifice which stands today as the home grounds for traditional accounts of mental illness.

But, if we were to do a phenomenological analysis of therapy along the lines I am suggesting, I think we could show convincingly that it is not "the" ideology which matters but "the" affirmation of some meaningful premise "for the sake of which" behavior can be organized and enacted that is the real therapeutic vehicle. It does not matter whether the client affirms a Freudian, Adlerian, Jungian, Binswangerian, Rogerian or Kellyian premise regarding life. All of these formal-cause "reasons" for how to behave can prove successful to the life adjustment of any one of us. Of course, we cannot force one of these orientations on a person who can find no phenomenal sense of understanding in light of it. I think that a phenomenal analysis of how people meet with these theoretical positions would demonstrate that it is the framing theory which uniquely "throws light on" the course of an individual's life which will be affirmed, and, having then been put into daily usage, order a life and result thereby in a corrective adjustment which we would then refer to as a "cure" of neurosis. The multiple possibilities for various premises to "work" is probably why we have so much eclecticism in psychotherapy. This eclecticism is born in the search of the therapist for a meaningful predication of the case history. For each facet of that history as presented by the client, a well-read therapist can see one or more theoretical possibilities for "interpreting" the contents. As a result, clients come away with a dash of Freud, a dose of Jung, and a sprinkling of Adlerian premises on how to confront life.

But what about the non-insight forms of therapy, such as behavior modification, where supposedly nothing but an atheoretical scientific ideology guides the therapist to bring the client to a cure? How can it be said

that there is an "insight" taking place in this manipulative sequence? Well, I think that if we took our lead from the findings on awareness in conditioning, we would learn through phenomenological examination that there are probably several reasons being given to the client "for the sake of which" he or she can adapt behavior, over and above the specific manipulations being carried out. Think about the procedure which the client learns--to carefully outline a symptom picture, and, based on this planful study, to arrange a sequence of graded steps aimed at solving a specific problem; and then, the carrying out of this projection in manageable, self-assured steps. I find it hard to believe that this teleological strategy is totally lost on the client no matter how informally it may be encompassed as a life-predication for the future. As phenomenologists we would want to know just how relevant this--what I would call "insightful"--schematic for problem solving is to the actual therapy attained. I have not yet seen a therapy effort in which the client "practices" the behavioral series exclusively in phantasy, without ever literally "behaving" to achieve a cure. But, I suspect based on what we know of behavior that such a "behavior modification" cure is entirely possible.

3. The Telic Nature of Mental Health. The final point I would like to mention relates to my belief that mental health itself implies something teleological about the course of human behavior. Several years ago, I conducted exit interviews with about a dozen mental patients, who were to leave a large State Hospital 24 hours after our meeting. I considered this project a phenomenological survey to determine the sorts of predications which these men and women (of various ages) were aligning for affirmation, preliminary to their discharge from the hospital. I found, as you might guess, that their plans, life outlooks, expectations, goals--however you

want to discuss the telic aspects of their behavior--were miserable, foreshadowing failure in future adjustment no matter "who" would bring them to bear. Any one of us would have led a fouled-up life if we acted on the basis of what these unfortunate men and women were using as the "that" for the sake of which they intended to behave. And I do not mean here just "long term goals." I mean the very way in which they came at life daily was calculated to generate confusion, frustration, and resentment.

I was interested in their phenomenal sense of illness, of what being mentally "ill" meant to them. After hearing what they had to say I tried a little experiment, in which I suggested that unlike all those physical illnesses they tended to blame their mental illness on, I believed that mental illness was a form of "sickness in the future"--that the reason they got fouled up and landed in the hospital was not because of things that happened "to" them, but to the things which they were "coming at" to do or to avoid doing "from now on." I found that these patients were quite capable of understanding the drift of my telic suggestion. I believe that an effective phenomenologist, using the spontaneous experiences of people like this, should be able to give us a whole lot more of such--admittedly speculative--theoretical leads to pursue in our work as therapists and scientists.

I want to end on a note of science, because too often when we think of phenomenology we think of a sort of resistance to empirical research. I think that some psychologists who gravitate to the phenomenological outlook find the strictures of scientific methodology to be too stifling for profitable use. I do not. It seems to me that phenomenology is the perfect antidote to certain escapist tendencies which psychologists exhibit in their so-called dedication to empirical research. Psychologists profess to be so

devoted to empiricism because they are striving to be properly rigorous in their scientific approach. But I have another view of this commitment. It seems to me that the more strictly empirical we are, and the more we claim our role is that of merely "tracking" or "manipulating" observable behavior without preconceptions about telic determination, the easier it is to do the work of science. We can avoid the responsibility of knowing--really knowing--human nature if we can "control and predict" the person in the experimental apparatus or the behavior-mod program. Phenomenology enters at this point to provide a "second opinion" regarding why it is that a predictable course of behavior may be taking place in either context. Phenomenology allows the person in the apparatus or the conditioning program to speak for himself or herself. More generally, phenomenology asks that we strip ourselves of preconceptions, as best we can, and examine with self-critical honesty whether or not we are capturing in our experimental researches that which we profess to be studying. Phenomenology is our humanistic conscience, calling us back to that which we have set out in psychology to do--i.e., understand ourselves.

But given that we make the adjustments, and re-frame the human situation more genuinely and openly than it now may be getting framed, it does not follow that this enlighted picture is unsuitable to empirical investigation. I believe and have in my own work tried to demonstrate that teleological, phenomenologically-based theoretical constructs can be put to the test of experimental validation. Psychology has yet to effect the revolution that Mach and others effected in physics. This was solely a revolution in theory. It did not change the way scientists conducted validating experiments of their theoretical hypotheses. We in psychology who speak from phenomenological perspectives can, and if we work hard in time will, promote

a clearer, more humane conceptualization of human behavior--putting it to empirical test in our laboratories and to practical benefit in our consulting rooms.

FOOTNOTE

1. This paper was delivered at the 88th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association held on September 3, 1980, in Montreal, Canada.

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